

OHS 50th Anniversary
Fran Majestic Introduction

Interviewer: Fran, can you please introduce yourself and your role here at Head Start?

Fran Majestic: Sure. I'm Fran Majestic. I'm the director of Program Operations here in the Office of Head Start. And, you probably wonder what is operations. I have oversight over 12 regional offices across the country. And our office supports them in trying to make sure that they have the resources and information that they need to reach out to the grantees. And, those of you who are Head Start grantees probably know your program's specialists. And so, we support them in a variety of different ways to make sure that you have what you need to operate the program.

Interviewer: Fran, what brings you to work in the morning? What's your favorite part of your job?

Fran: I love to come to work in the morning, and that has not changed in the 30 years I've been with Head Start. And the reason for that, I think, is because of the people that I'm around, and the belief system of those that work in the Office of Head Start. You know, there's something about Head Start that really brings out the best in people. We're a program that looks to people for their strengths, and when I look at the talent, and the motivation, and the skills of the people in this office to try to do the best for the kids in this country, that's what really brings me here every day. Data was always interesting, too. Somehow I thought the government had everything and knew everything about all of our programs. But it turned out that we had a bunch of different data systems. So, I feel really lucky that I was able to start working on a project that put those together and built the management system that works, I think, very well for our grantees and for our office. And some of the public display of that is finally having a list of our Head Start centers so parents know where to find services.

Interviewer: Can you tell us your experience with the Head Start program. How did you come to Head Start?

Fran: Sure, I would love to tell that story. You know, I've been shy about this story for a really long time. But, I really want parents to hear this story. I started in Head Start when my youngest son was three. And I was way out in the middle of the woods, in a little tiny community, and bumped into another parent at a store who said, "You should try Head Start." And I didn't want to because I didn't want my baby in school. But, in fact, I was living in some pretty serious circumstances of poverty, and I decided to go ahead and reach out and give it a try. And that's what happened. I had the most wonderful home visitor who stayed a friend for 20 years after the fact. And, you know, I started as a home visitor, probably the year that he turned four. And, I was working with preschool children. And, after I did that, our sectors switched to do center-based, and I stayed with the program, did center-based work, and I became really interested in a new program that eventually became Early Head Start -- what was first Parent and Child Center programs. And after I did that, I switched to management after a while. And I did have half and half because I still really loved home visiting. And, eventually, I had a -- I had an accident at work, actually. And that's what made the decision for me. I switched over to doing full-time management in the Early Head Start program. By that time, we had written for and received one of the Early Head Start grants, way back when it first started. You know, I'm one of those geeks. I got really excited when the Performance Standards came out, and actually had something about infants and toddlers in it that would help guide us in our work.

Interviewer: Can you tell us how you came to your current role as Director of Operations at the Office of Head Start?

Fran: Sure. So, I started at Head Start as a fellow, and I stayed on as a management analyst. And I worked in a variety of different things. I remember thinking how interesting it was that someone could come from a local program and start working and assisting writing a regulation shortly after getting here. But it really does happen that way. It's real people that write regulations, and policy, and things in, in government. And then I applied for the fellowship with, once again, the encouragement of some great mentors. And, surprisingly, got it, and within a few months of coming to the Office of Head Start, I knew that I really wanted to stay here and work out the rest of my career and program that I really and truly care about.

[End video]